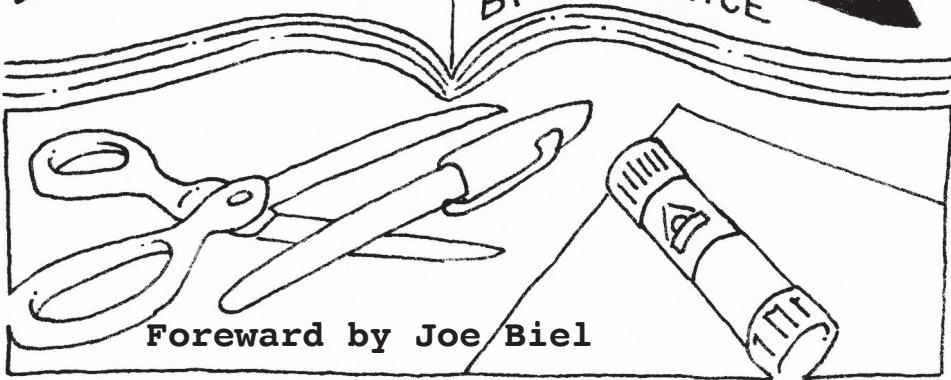
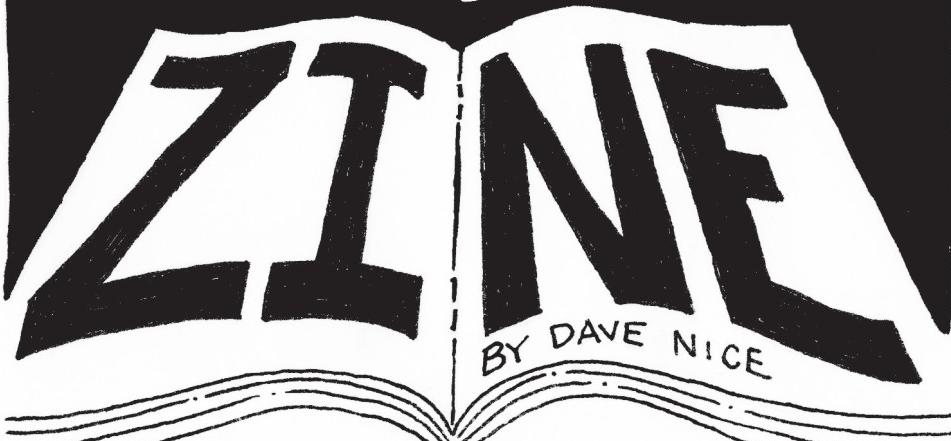


YOU CAN MAKE

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...AND HELP US GROW YOUR SMALL WORLD!

Foreward by Joe Biel

Despite it's obfuscated word origin in the 1920s, a zine is best described as a cross between a love letter and a book. A zine showcases the author's obsessions in a way that is so infectious that others become interested in those topics even if they weren't previously. It's a window into someone else's world and fascinations without the clinical or academic distance that often comes in textbooks or the newspaper. While zines were originally ways for fans to write about their fandom with science fiction and wrestling, they were later embraced by DIY subcultures such as the beat poets, punk rock, and street art. Because zines are so complex, no introductory guide could ever cover all of the bases, nor should we want it to. Zines are beautifully unique creatures like dinosaurs or unicorns, outside of our imaginations and a product of lived experiences and culture. If we tried to copy someone else's form or style, we simply couldn't do it with the same levels of authenticity or believability because each zine comes uniquely from the person whose mind created it.

Introduction

Back in the day, my friends and I made cut-and-paste flyers for our band at the copy shop, which is where I gained my interest in creating layouts by hand. Back then, one of my friends was always showing us the latest issue of his own zine, *White Trash*. Because of his zine, he got to talk to some of his favorite underground bands and interview them as well as getting press passes to local punk rock shows. Sometimes he would get tapes or CDs in the mail from people who wanted him to review their albums. I thought, "How cool is all that?" Years later, inspired by my friend, I would make my own zine about street art and because of that zine I got to meet some of my favorite street artists. A handful of the people I met while doing zines have become lifelong friends. In my experience, that's the best part about making your own zine—the friendships you will make along the way.

Part I – What's a zine, anyway?

For our purposes a zine, pronounced ZEEN, derived from the word “magAZINE” and short for “fanZINE” is a DIY (Do It Yourself) printed, often photocopied publication produced normally in small quantities of 10-200 copies, sometimes more. Most zines are 5.5” x 8.5”, called “half-size” but they can be any size. An 8.5” x 11” zine would be considered full-size. A zine can be about any topic from poetry to politics and can be a one-off issue or an ongoing series. Some zines have been going for many years and have tons of issues. The zine you are holding is an example of a one-off, half-size zine.

Part II – Why even make a zine?

Don't people only read stuff online these days? Why go to all the trouble of making a hardcopy zine? I'm glad you asked. When you make a zine, you are starting a real conversation with peers and readers. You are putting real effort into telling people about whatever your passions. When you take the added steps of making a physical zine it shows that you really care about the contents and that medium of communicating. You could just post something quickly on social media, but you instead invested your time and thought into making something you could physically hand to somebody. In this digital-everything age, that carries weight... literally. In addition, making a zine can help you collect your thoughts about something you're passionate about into a form, perhaps mixing words and pictures that other people can easily digest and feels more substantial and legitimate than a more distanced or nuanced account. Making a zine is a way to become an expert on a topic in which you are interested. Will you become rich and famous from making a zine? Probably not but if you do it for fun and for the love of the subject your zine is about, you'll really enjoy the experience of making a zine as it will bring you closer to other people who care about the same things. It's very rewarding to hold a finished zine that you've put a lot of work into and be able to say, “I made this.” It's also rewarding to have someone else read your zine and tell you what they enjoyed about it.

Part III – So you wanna make a zine... what's next?

OK. So you've decided to make your own zine. Great! Knowing where to start is important. Deciding what to make your zine about is the first step. Your topic should be something you're passionate about, and hopefully something that can sustain your interest at least long enough to finish one issue of your zine. If you're an interest-hopper (as I have been in the past) you may find yourself making a zine about something you no longer care about or changing topics frequently. Think about topics that excite you and will hold your interest for a long time. It's even better if it's a subject that can spark dialog with friends, peers, and strangers. My first zine, *PEELzine*, was about street art with a focus on stickers. While street art was super cool, it became difficult and limiting to write about, so the second zine, *Surface Area*, included all kinds of visual art. Give yourself room to explore your related fascinations.

Next, you'll need some simple supplies. The most basic zines can be made using a handful of very simple materials readily available at schools or offices. At the very least you will need the following supplies:

- * 8.5" x 11" plain copy paper
- * Pen / sharpie
- * Scissors
- * Glue stick / tape
- * Access to a photocopier
- * Stapler

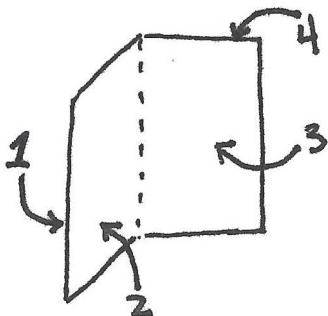
Some other things that may be useful but are not necessary are the following:

- * Typewriter / computer with a printer
- * Photographs or magazines to cut images from
- * White out
- * Hobby knife
- * Cutting mat
- * Ruler
- * Light table (or a window)
- * Colored paper or cardstock (for fancy covers)
- * Corkboard / a pinboard (to help with stapling)

Have you got what you need? Awesome.

Part IV – How to DIY (Do It Yourself)

Now that you have all the stuff you'll need, you'll need some basic practical information to help your zine-making experience go smoothly. For example, if you're making a half-size zine the number of pages of your zine (including the front and back cover) will need to be a multiple of four. You could make an eight-page or a 32-page zine but not a nine or 31-page zine. The total number of pages has to be evenly divisible by four. The reason for that is that when you take a sheet of paper and fold it in half it creates four pages.

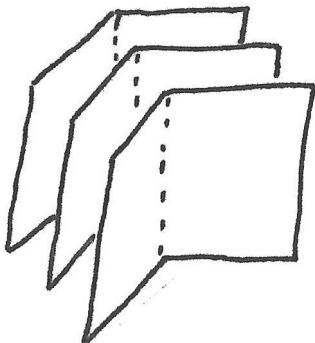


**One 8 1/2" x 11" sheet
folded in half makes
four pages.**

The upper limit on your page count is often determined first by how much you have to say and then by what kind of stapler you're using. A basic office stapler can generally staple up to 20 sheets of paper at a time, which would create an 80-page zine. For your first zine though, I would recommend starting smaller. A 12 to 20-page zine is a nice way to start. Also, when you lay out your zine you may want to think in spreads, which are two adjacent pages that are visible at the same time. For example the text on the left page goes with the image on the right page, creating a spread. Or you may have one big image or a combination of text and images that go all the way across the center. Don't put any important information such as words right in the middle, as they may not be visible after stapling.

There's more than one way to lay out a zine, but least technical way is to fold several sheets of paper in half and put them together nested one inside the other. Don't staple them together, because you'll need to separate them in order to make copies of your zine.

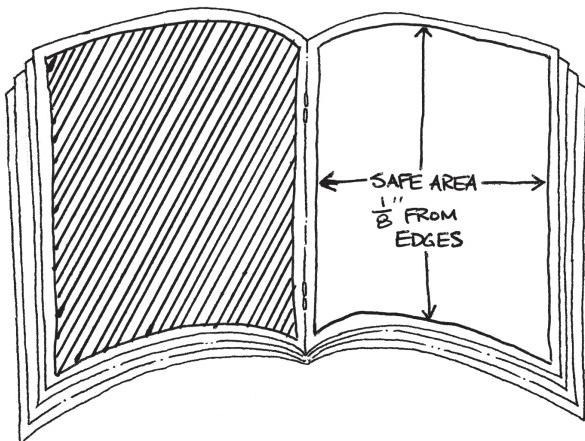
These sheets of paper will be your artboards for laying out your zine. You will actually write, draw, and/or glue things onto these sheets to create your original master copy.



8 1/2" x 11" sheets folded in half can be used as artboards to lay out your zine.

If you're using Sharpies, you will want to draw on a separate piece of paper, cut out the images, and glue them onto your master copy. This is so the drawings won't bleed through to the other side of the paper. Also, if you do have an image that goes across the center of the spread, you'll have to cut it, placing part of it on the left page and the other part of it on the right page. Remember, the master pages have to come apart so you can copy them. The exception to this rule is the center spread, and there you can place an image across the middle without having to cut it. Also don't put anything important right up to the edge of a page because many copy machines cannot "see" the eighth of an inch along the edge of the page.

Keep all the important stuff inside the safe area (1/8" from the edges).



Part V - Making the Cover

Making the cover is perhaps most important aspect of your zine. A good cover could mean the difference between someone actually opening your zine to read what's inside or just passing it over. The cover is your opportunity to show and tell someone what they need to know about your zine and why they might be interested in it. You should think of the cover as your "elevator pitch" in which you have just a few seconds to convince a potential reader that your zine is worth their time. There's no absolute rules for making a good zine cover, but it should contain at least the title of the zine, the issue number (if it's an ongoing zine), a cover price (if you're going to be selling it at events, in stores, or online), and a compelling image that will intrigue potential readers and give them an idea of what the zine is about. Some other things that you may want to include are a short list of the articles in the zine, or another way to intrigue people is to put the names of well-known people, bands, artists, etc. on the cover if your zine has some connection to them, for example, you interviewed or wrote a story about them. A third thing you might want to include is hot topics that your zine deals with to show your potential reader that the zine is current and relevant. Beyond those basics, the only other thing to remember is to BE CREATIVE. I can't stress that enough. Creative covers are the ones that intrigue people and get them to read zines. Imagine a shelf full of different zines that all look basically the same, and then you see one very creative cover standing out over the others. Wouldn't you be more likely drawn to that creative cover to pick up that zine and see what it's about? I would, and so would your potential readers. So let's say the ABCs of zine cover design are Always Be Creative.

Part VI - Production

Once you've laid out your zine, you'll want to make some copies of it. Some copy machines are pretty fancy these days and those kind will let you scan in the front and back of each master page and many of the new machines will even sequence and staple the finished copies for you. If you're not lucky enough to have access to one of these machines, a simple old school

photocopier will work fine. It will just take a little more work on the back end to sequence, fold, and staple your zines together. If you're using an old school type copier this would be a good time to get some help from a friend or two and have a "zine making party." One person can fold, one can collate, and one can staple if you can entice two friends to be involved. Put on some music, and have fun!

If you have a regular office stapler, you can open it and put a corkboard under your zine when you're stapling it and press the stapler down against the cork-board. Then use a pair of scissors to close the staple. Alternatively, there are long-arm staplers that you can use. I borrowed one from the company I worked for fifteen years ago and haven't gotten around to giving it back yet.



Part VII - Distribution

Zines get sold in stores through organizations called "distros" or zine distributors. The distros take part of the cover price (normally 40-50%) for getting the zines into stores. You can find extensive lists of stores that sell zines and distros that sell zines via mailorder, though these lists change frequently. They often open, change addresses, and close all within a few years. It's the beautiful impermanence of the medium that things are always changing and new people are finding the passion not just to write and share their experiences but to create underground conduits for helping other people do the same thing. You can find a list at:

Besides distros, there are other ways to get your zines into people's hands. You can set up an Etsy or similar type of online shop, fulfilling orders yourself. You can walk into local stores or coffee shops you think might carry your zine, ask to talk to the manager or owner, and show them your zine. There are numerous online outlets and magazines that review zines as well, which you can also find lists of online. If you are in a band or have friends who are you can sell your zines at the merch table. You can even sell them out of your backpack.

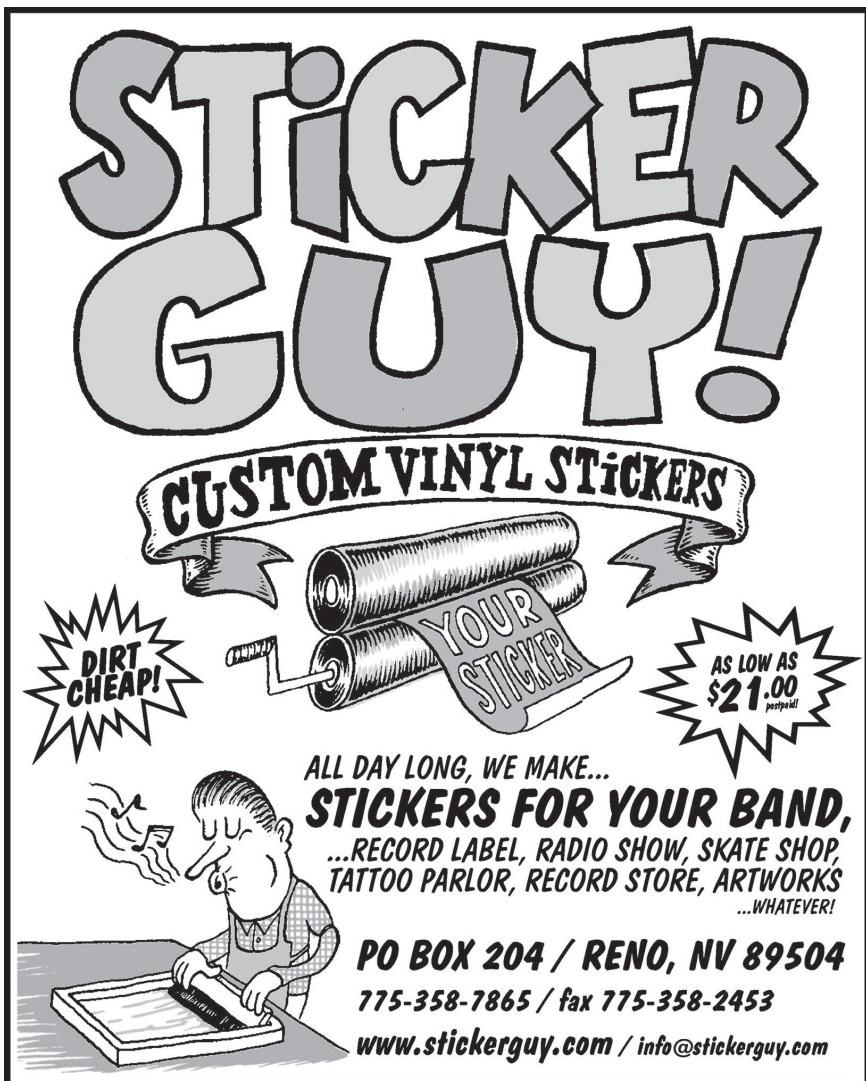
Part VIII - Growing your zine

If you decide that you want to reach more people with your zine, you'll eventually have to print more copies. Unless you have a free "hook up" for printing, you'll have to either pay for larger print runs out-of-pocket or use the money you've gotten from selling previous issues to finance the larger print runs. One other way to finance your larger print run is to include advertising. Before you jump in and start looking for advertisers, you should make sure it's right for you and your zine. There are a few factors apart from the money to consider. Working with advertisers will complicate things. For example, you may have an issue of your zine ready to print except for that one last advertiser who hasn't given you their ad layout yet or their company's identity might not fit your zine as well as you'd like. If you include advertising, some people are bound to look at your zine differently—either good or bad. On the one hand, it adds a certain legitimacy but it also makes your zine seem more, how should I put it? ...corporate. Whatever your decision about advertising, don't let other people judge you on it. Make the decision that is right for you. The third factor is simply space. Advertising takes up space in your zine, and that means less space for the content you want to create.

Part IX - Keep going

You Can Make a Zine got you started and you are now ready to make your own zine. If you want to learn more about zines one of the best ways is to talk to other people who make them. Another is to look at the zines other people have made. And a third is to

read up. One person who has written more extensively about zine-making is Alex Wrekk. In her book *Stolen Sharpie Revolution* she gets much more in-depth on the subject. If You Can Make a Zine has been helpful in making your own zines, please drop me a line at: dave@dpwords.org and let me know. I'd love to hear from you. Whether zine making becomes a hobby or an obsession itself, the most important thing I can tell you about it is to have fun and keep going!



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best wishes for your
zine-making adventures!

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